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ABSTRACT

This report describes a project for increasing parental involvement through the existing reading program. The targeted first and second grade students lived in growing rural, Midwestern, low to middle class communities located in north central Illinois. The problem was noted in literature by researchers who found that parents had a very limited involvement in their student's education. The problem was documented further through data from surveys and teacher observations. Analysis of the probable cause data, as well as the professional literature, revealed that several possible causes existed for the lack of parental involvement. Parent's lack of time, their comfort level, and lack of understanding of how to be involved contributed to their lack of participation. The solution strategies consisted of providing parents with opportunities to assist their students in reading projects both at home and at school. Parents were asked to read a favorite family story or poem to the class. Upon completion of the story/poem the parent and their child involved the entire class in an activity. Suggestions of activities for parents to share with students included: an art project, social skills lesson, writing activity, or correlating with other curriculum areas. This approach encouraged parents to feel comfortable working with their students as well as their participation in the classroom setting. The classroom instructor measured the effect of this intervention. The primary investigator completed the responsibility of gathering surveys, journals, and teacher observation checklists. All modes of gathering data were completed on a daily basis. Post intervention data indicated an increase in student reading attributed to parental involvement. (Contains 20 references, and 4 tables and 3 figures of data. Appendixes contain parent surveys; forms to record books read; letters to parents; and a follow-up survey.) (Author/RS)

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IMPROVING READING SKILLS THROUGH PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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Jennifer Pillion

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of the Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership.

Saint Xavier University &

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Chicago, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a project for increasing parental involvement through the existing reading program. The targeted 1st and 2nd grade students lived in growing rural, Midwestern, low to middle class communities located in north central Illinois. The problem was noted in literature by researchers who found that parents had a very limited involvement in their student's education. The problem was documented further through data from surveys and teacher observations.

Analysis of the probable cause data, as well as the professional literature, revealed that several possible causes existed for the lack of parental involvement. Parent's lack of time, their comfort level, and lack of understanding of how to be involved contributed to their lack of participation.

The solution strategies consisted of providing parents with opportunities to assist their students in reading projects both at home and at school. Parents were asked to read a favorite family story or poem to the class. Upon completion of the story/poem the parent and their child involved the entire class in an activity. Suggestions of activities for parents to share with students included: an art project, social skills lesson, writing activity, or correlating with other curriculum areas. This approach encouraged parents to feel comfortable working with their students as well as their participation in the classroom setting.

The classroom instructor measured the effect of this intervention. The primary investigator completed the responsibility of gathering surveys, journals, and teacher observation checklists. All modes of gathering data were completed on a daily basis.

Post Intervention data indicated an increase in student reading attributed to parental involvement.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The parents of the targeted classes (Site A – first grade and Site B – second grade) exhibited a lack of involvement in their children's academic and social performance. Evidence for the existence of the problem included anecdotal records that documented parent volunteers, attendance in the PTO and PTA (parent organizations) meetings, classroom assistance and teacher journals.

Immediate Problem Context

Site A

Site A was established in 1958 in central Illinois. It was originally built as an elementary building, which was to house grades kindergarten through sixth grade. It now has a current setting as an elementary building that is home to pre-kindergarten through second grade. There were a total of 226 students in the district as of September 30,1999. The ethnic background was 94.4% White, 3.0% Hispanic, and 2.6% Black. Site A has 24.5% of its attending students considered low income with none having a limited English-Proficiency. School reports have shown that there is an attendance average of 95.4% with mobility at 18.9%.

Site A has 31 faculty members. Their average year of teaching experience was 13.3 years. Eighty percent of the teachers had bachelor degrees and nineteen percent had master degrees. All faculty members were White with 87.1% female and 12.9% being male (State School Report Card, 2000).

The school building had eight classrooms. There was two of every grade level present in the building. The building housed grades pre-kindergarten to second grade. The site also housed a speech classroom, two special education resource rooms, a music room, a gymnasium, a lunchroom and a Title One room. The available space was filled to capacity.

Site A had several school programs that went beyond the classroom curriculum. It offered Title One reading services throughout the day to any students in need of extra one-on-one reading time. A social worker came into the classrooms once a week to teach a Second Step behavior management program to the students. The teachers created a reading program called A Wonderful World Of Reading. The program was for parents and their children to work on together at home with rewards given out each month. Each class received music instruction twice a week for twenty minutes, art instruction once a week for 40 minutes, and a physical education class everyday for 25 minutes. The school day lasted 6 hours. Site A offered a breakfast program to the children every morning as well as a daily lunch. All meals were paid on an income basis.

There was personal contact between 97.2% of the students, parent/guardians and the school staff during the school year. Personal contact included parent teacher conferences, parental visits to the school, visits to the home, telephone conversations, and written correspondence.

Site B

Site B is a K-4th grade attendance center that housed 225 students. The student enrollment was comprised of 94.7% White, 3.1 % Hispanic, 1.3% Native American and less than .9 each of Black and Asian/Pacific Islander. The targeted school population

included 22.7% of the students from low-income families. The attendance rate was 96.2% with student mobility and one chronic truant for the 2000 school year.

The total number of certified, full-time staff members working in the targeted school was 15, which included an administrator. Other certified staff included a guidance counselor and a teacher of gifted/talented students servicing this site one day per week. Also, included staff members were teacher-aides for each kindergarten class and three one-on-one student aides.

The average number of years experience for the teaching staff was 18.3 years with 81.3% of the teacher's holding bachelor degrees and 18.7% master degrees. Males made up 17.3% of the teacher population while 82.7% was female.

Each self-contained classroom provided an objective based curriculum for social studies, science, health, math, and language arts. In addition, a Remedial Reading/Title 1 program included a Reading Recovery program for identified first graders. A full day resource learning disabilities program and junior first grade, which provided services for the entire district, were located in this targeted school.

Art classes met 50-minute periods per week, physical education met daily for 25 minutes and music for two 30-minute periods per week, with a drama class meeting 30 minutes for a semester. The services for the school counselor, a social worker, nurse, and speech/language therapist were available to staff members in assisting students with special needs. The targeted school had a learning center with a full-time library/computer aide. A computer lab was equipped with 25 Compaq computers for teachers to schedule classes in for three 30-minute periods per week.

The Surrounding Community

Site A

The community setting was a rural midwestern town of 3,619 people. The median family income for the town was $23,457 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Fifteen major industries employ 1,544 people (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990).

The town was located near two major interstates and a railway system, which provided access to most major cities in the state. There were no hospitals in the town but three were located within a 25-mile radius. A library was located within blocks of the targeted school. Parks and recreational facilities included two public parks and a public swimming pool.

The targeted school district had an enrollment of 509 students, which served five different communities. There was an elementary building housing grades pre-kindergarten to second grade totaling 226 students. A second building consists of third to eighth grade with a total of 283 students. The school district employs 31 faculty and staff with two administrators. The administration included one superintendent and one principal.

The surrounding community supported the school in several ways. New industry was moving into the area causing new housing developments. The city and school district had developed a good partnership, which provided any needed services due to the growth. All extracurricular support groups combined to form a unified group. They worked together to plan family nights, parent volunteer programs, and parent support and educational sessions. The local police department presented a DARE program which

lasted all year. The public library offered reading materials and reading programs for the students and parents after school hours.

The operating expenditure per pupil for the 1998-1999 school year was 5,462 for the district. The average teacher's salary was $33,008. Salaries included various monetary benefits and compensations such as retirement benefits, health and life insurance, and extra curricular duty payments. The average administrators' salary for the targeted district was $77,703 (State School Report Card, 2000).

Site B

The community setting was a rural midwestern county seat of 7,200 people. Rich in history, the community, which was over 100-years-old, still prided itself on its past. Citizens tended to be middle-class, Caucasian, almost entirely of European descent. The community had a large public library, a city-owned hospital and utility company, an athletic center, a historical museum, 19 churches and 6 parks. A privately owned newspaper and radio station kept locals apprised of current events of the day. Besides the public elementary schools, there were two parochial elementary facilities and one public high school.

The economic base for the area was primarily agricultural and light manufacturing. The tourism industry was on the rise with out-of-town visitors coming to visit many of the city's quaint specialty shops, a covered bridge, several antique malls and enjoying the friendly rural atmosphere.

Sales tax revenues continued to grow, and in 1999, the average household income was $33,459.

As reported in the 2000 School Report Card, the local elementary district consisted of six attendance centers; one of which was in a nearby community. Four of the buildings were designated for kindergarten through fourth grade, one for fifth- and sixth-grade classes, and one for seventh and eighth. The total student population of the district was 1,270.

The average teaching experience of the district's teachers was 18.3 years. The average salary for the 1999-2000 was $38,881.

There was one district superintendent and one assistant superintendent. Each attendance center in the district had its own principal. The pupil-administrator ratio was 158.8 to1. The administrators' salary, including various monetary benefits and compensation, averaged $62,386 for the 1990-2000 school year.

Over one-fifth, or 22.7% of the total student population, was considered low income. The instructional expenditure per pupil in 1998-1999 was reported at $3,599. The total expenditure per student for the district was $5,471.

National Context

As indicated by inclusion in recent legislation parental involvement in schools has generated concern at the national level. Extensive research over the past 30 years shows parental involvement is instrumental in the success of a child's education. "Research has demonstrated consistently that parent involvement is one of the keys to success in school for all children of ages and all types. Meaningful parent involvement results in improved student achievement, attendance, motivation, self-esteem, and behavior. Parent involvement also is a major contributor to children's positive attitude toward school and

teachers. Indeed, the more parents are involved, the more children benefit" (Henderson, 1987, para. 11).

The children are not the only ones to benefit from this involvement. Additional research suggested that parental involvement in school/education benefited parents, teachers, and schools as well as the students, no matter the school level of the child. The problem with the term parent involvement is that it is a vague concept with a wide variety of interpretations of what this involves. Schools must understand that family involvement can take many forms. According the National Center for Education Statistics, parental involvement can include "attendance at a general meeting (open houses or back to school nights), a schedule meeting with a teacher (parent-teacher conferences), a school event (class plays, sports, or science fair), or acting as a volunteer or committee member" (Writ, 2000, p. 97). Other researchers believe parental involvement to include events occurring at home such as ensuring proper behavior and the completion of assigned homework.

No matter one's interpretation of parental involvement, one thing is apparent; the need for establishing good communications. Meek states that with a baseline communication program in place all members involved in the education process benefit. (1999).

Schools must recognize and offer a range of strategies, which take into account the diversity in cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds within families. These strategies need to suggest to parents ways to support the children at home and in the school atmosphere. The school must also be sure that the strategies available are age appropriate for their children. These will allow parents and teachers to meet individual student's needs.

Schools need to provide ongoing support in order for parents to provide effective involvement. Judith A.Vandegrift stated that efforts made to build support through improved communication with parents resulted in increased involvement (1992).

Schools need to find ways to build connections with community members as well. "To establish baseline communications... promises great benefits in terms of moving toward ensuring optimum learning opportunities for students in school today and generating support in the future" (Meek, 1999, para. 15). Schools must understand that without community support school systems will fail.

Lorence Lezotte states that school improvement will prevail if educators pursue and encourage parent involvement and get "Beyond the Bake Sale'' (1986). It has been researched that some schools do not make enough face-to-face follow up contacts with parents. Decker points out that parent involvement is simply not a part of American school's value systems (1997). Schools should strive to develop more parent programs that give them specifics on how to help their children at home, school, and in the community. "Ideally, you want parent-school-community programs,'' he says. "Those are the most powerful'' (Make It Happen, 1997, para. 62). "The evidence is so overwhelming about the benefits of parent involvement for students," Decker says, "that for educators to not even attempt it is engaging in professional malpractice" (Make It Happen, 1997, para. 51).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the lack of parent involvement in the academic and social reading performance of the students, surveys, take home assignments, in class projects assisted by parents, and reading logs were used.

Surveys were used to evaluate the lack of parent/school communication (Appendix A). Questions on the survey asked parents what they did to volunteer at their child's school, how often they communicated with teachers, and availability for volunteering at school.

Table 1

Parent Volunteer Survey for First and Second Grade

47%	12%	24%	0%	12%	29%
16/34	4/34	8/34	0/34	8/34	10/34

In the targeted first and second grade classrooms, 34 surveys out of 37 reflect that there were twice as many parents that interpret volunteering as accompanying classes on field trips and assisting with holiday parties. The lack of parent participation in support with academic areas in the classroom was evident with only 24% showing actual involvement in the classroom.

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Table 2

Parent Communication Regarding Child's Academic Performance

	often	little	never
First Grade	29%	71%	0%
Second Grade	56%	44%	0%

In the above table parents were surveyed to determine how often they communicate with the school regarding their child's performance. The data showed that in the first grade class 14 out of 16 surveys showed that, 29% stated they often communicate, 71% sometimes communicate, with 0% never communicating. In the second grade class from 18 surveys out of 21 returned, 56% responded that they often communicate, 44% sometimes communicate, 0% never communicate.

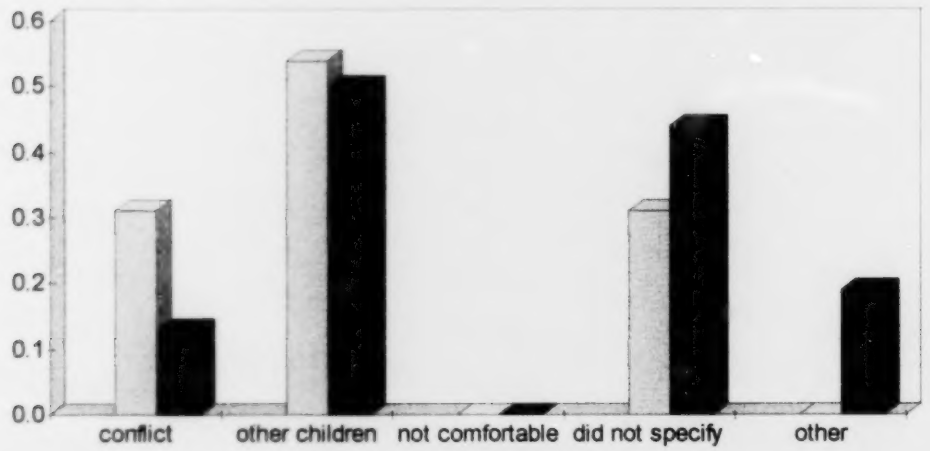

Figure 1

Reasons for Parent's Lack of Reading with Child

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In a means to move parents closer to the involvement of their children's education, our reading survey indicates why some parents are unable to read with their children. It was shown that in the targeted first and second grade over 50% of the parents stated that having other children in the home posed a problem when trying to read to their child. Another factor in the lack of reading to their child in the first grade appeared to be the conflict with work scheduling, that being 31%. While in second grade 13% responded work scheduling interfered with extra time spent on reading. From the 13 of 16 surveys sent 31% of first grade parents did not specify a particular reason for the inability to read to their child. While 16 out of the 21 second grade parent surveys reflect no response totaling 44%.

As evident in figure 1 over 50% of parents surveyed indicated that additional children in the home prevented desired time for reading with their child. Table 3 below shows how many children are in each home and how many times they are read to by a parent each week.

Table 3

First Grade

Number of Children in the Home	Times read to each week
3	3
3	2
3	3
2	2
1	3
1	2
2	5
1	14
2	3
2	4
4	1
3	4
4	3

Second Grade

Number of Children in the Home	Times read to each week
4	5
6	5
4	7
1	6
2	5
2	3
4	3
3	5
2	3
1	4
2	4
3	6
3	2
1	5
2	4
1	5

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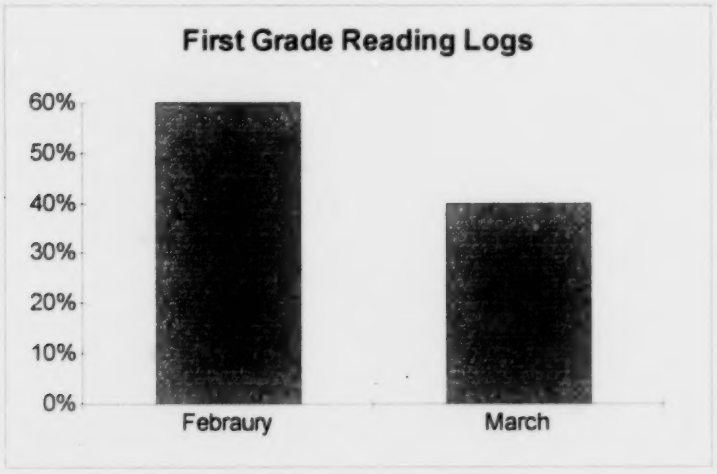
Both classroom teachers used a chart to document the total additional books read at home, which were verified by parents (Appendix B). In the targeted second grade percentages were higher than the first grade, reflecting their independent reading ability. The lower percentages seen in the first grade can be interpreted as showing a lack of parental involvement as these students have not yet acquired the skills to become an independent reader (See Figure 2).



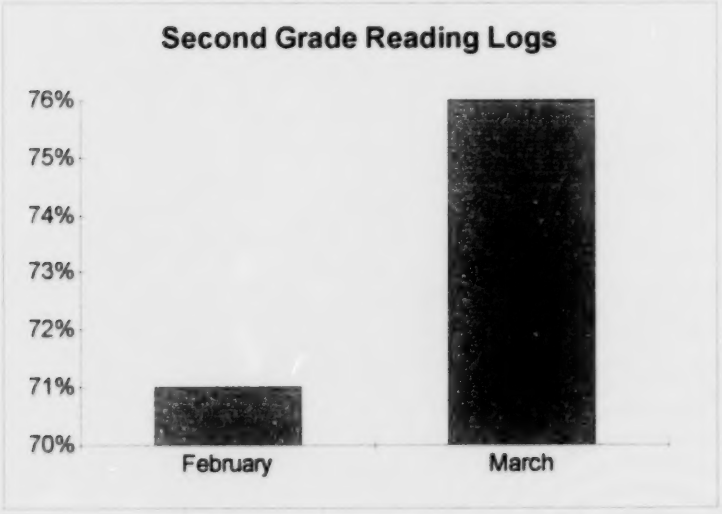


Figure 2

Probable Causes

Family involvement has seen an enormous amount of changes but is still viewed as a two-parent, with a working father and a homemaker mother (David 1989).

Schools have experienced considerable change over the past 15 years. In part, this anomaly is the result of a changing family structure and function. In the past several years, two-parent families have found it financially necessary (or opted) for both parents to work outside the home. Single-parent families have also contributed to a change in the school atmosphere. Single-parent families are more consumed with working several jobs to meet their financial needs. This, in turn, leaves other family members or caretakers to support the child's educational needs. Likewise, teachers frequently see students being raised by extended family member, and children who must spend many hours before and after school in day care facilities. Parents have reported many barriers, which prevented their involvement in school activities. Several barriers stated were job and time pressures and negative communications from schools (Collins, Cooper, and Whitmore 1995). Many researchers have found that their are personal barriers also, such as lack of understanding of much English, and the embarrassment of appearance and financial status (Gutloff 1997). All of these factors have been reported to contribute to the decrease of leisure-time reading within the family.

The US Department of Education has stated that, as children grow older, contacts between families and schools decrease both in number and in the positive nature of such contacts (Puma, Jones, Rock, and Fernandez 1993). Other researchers have found many parents feel they are involved in the education of their child.

The word "involvement" differed in definition between educators and parents. "Mothers and fathers hold bake sales, supervise field trips, and serve on boards and advisory councils for schools. They attend school concerts, plays, and sporting event. As helpful as the customary forms of parent involvement are they are far removed from what happens in the classroom. A growing body of research suggests parents can play a larger

role in the child's education" (Peterson 1989, para. 1).

Some parents consider leisure time- attending field trips, plays, and sporting events as being involved in their child's education. Often, they view this leisure time as homework, instead of view a necessary element in the growth of their child.

On the contrary schools seldom define parent involvement by those who attend a field trip, sporting event, or school concert. "They were looking at how many parents actively participated in and supported the schools by coming to parent workshops, reading in the classrooms, helping their child do homework, attending parent advisory committee meetings- all activities requiring high levels of commitment and participation" (Vandergrift and Greene 1992, para. 7).

By accepting this definition of parent involvement, schools are not helping parents understand the need for participation in the classroom. One area stated which lacks parental involvement in the classroom is reading. Care should be taken by the schools to offer parents a range of support in this curriculum area (Coleman 1991). By involving parents in the school reading programs it is believed that they will be more likely to support home reading activities (Fredricks and Rasinski, 1989). Reading needs to be taught as a life-long skill. Parents and schools need to come together to guide children's understanding of the importance of this skill for their success in everyday living.

Chapter 3
Solution Strategy

Literature Review

Several solutions are presented in current professional literature for the development in parental involvement, with an emphasis on engaging students to become lifelong independent readers. Schools and parents need to work together to define parent involvement. Each side needs to communicate the direction which the involvement meets the social and academic needs of the child. Know who your parents are and build school repertoire with as many options as possible (Vandergrift, J. / Greene, A. 1992). According to Patrikakou, E. / Weissberg, R. (1999) both teachers and parents have responsibilities and pressing time demands. Teachers must be the ones to take the initiative to pull the school family partnerships together and stress the importance of learning and success in school. However, as Jessie, (1998) stated schools couldn't do the big job of preparing our most precious resource for the future alone. It is important, therefore, to take advantage of the resource of those most interested in children--their parents-- in new and innovative ways.

Farkas, Johnson, Duffet, Aulicino, and McHugh (1999) believed there are several strategies to which parental involvement can be increased. Schools need to make the initial step in a variety of communications to make parents feel welcomed and an integral part within the school environment (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1996). There must be positive and frequent communication with parents by teachers to enhance increased involvement in their child's education both at home and in the school settings. (Nathan 1996). " When it comes to communications, silence is not golden. Educators must demonstrate the benefits of schools and schooling, build and maintain trust and confidence in their work within their communities, and strengthen the partnership of teachers and parents on the behalf of students" (Meek 1999 para. 22). Studies by Finders and Lewis (1994) cautioned schools not to assume that parents

absence translates into non-caring. It is stated that schools need to focus on ways to draw parents into schools in means of using multiple ways in which we value their language, cultures, and knowledge. Parents will then be more receptive to accepting frequent invitations made by schools.

There is no one best way to handle parent involvement. Involving parents in many different roles over time results in increased success. (Dept. of Education, State of Iowa). Educators need to make parents aware that their initial involvement has been established prior to any formal schooling their child has been exposed. Yates stated, " The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (According to Becher as cited by Owens, (1993).)

Reading aloud to children also promotes a bond between children and their adult readers, creates and develops shared topics of interest and familiarizes children with a variety of language patterns. These reading events also increase children's general interest in books and establish reading as a valued personal activity: two benefits that are likely to encourage children to become lifelong readers.

Schools need to take action to engage families both at home and in the school. According to the article, "Success in School" (2000.) this outreach is essential. Collins, Cooper, and Whitmore (1995) have stated that when the administration and staff of a school initiates a genuine desire to involve parents by considering their needs and capabilities, parental involvement would increase in the school. In addition, Rasmussen (1998) stated that teachers should not only consider the needs and capabilities of parents as educators should treat parents as equals in the decision making process of how and what is taught. During the school day students observe teachers showing excitement and pleasure in leisure reading. Reading in the school creates a positive attitude toward independent reading which parents need to further develop. Ways that parents can promote this is by giving books as gifts, visiting libraries, and interacting with their child about what is being read to them. Nebor (1986) and Pickles-Thomas (1992). By

involving parents in the school reading program, it is believed that they will be more likely to support home reading activities (Fredericks and Rasinski, 1989). When setting up a program to motivate students to read and involve parents, teachers should communicate clearly ideas for which parents can draw upon when participating in both the home and school. Peterson (1989) highlighted that intensive one to one conferencing with parents proves highly effective as opposed to meetings, which take parents away from their children and their home. Through these conferences a change can occur to which parents and educators feel a partnership in the participation efforts providing well-organized and long lasting programs offering parents a variety of roles (Cotton, K., & Wikelund, K.R. 1989). "As American families continue to change, programs for young children will need to adopt parent participation programs that reinforce a consistency of early growth and development experiences between children's family and classroom environments." (Coleman 1991, para. 20).

The following project objectives, outcomes and action plan were developed in the fall of 2000.

Project Objectives and Outcomes

As a result of receiving information on how parents can become more involved with their child's education during the period of January 2001 to April 2001, the parents will be encouraged to become more involved in the educational process. Parent involvement will be measured through participation checklists, teacher journals, and parent surveys.

Through a reading incentive program, parents will be encouraged to participate with their children to increase their reading skills.

In order to accomplish the project objective the following processes were necessary:

1. Develop more weekly at home reading activities.
2. Design a reading school based project, which will involve parental

participation.

3. Develop and implement reading activities which parents will come to school and participate.

Action Plan

The action plan was organized to address the major components of the project. The outline was organized into all 12 weeks designated for a school based incentive reading program. Take home reading projects were assigned for three weeks with the remaining weeks used for parent participation in the classroom.

January

Week 1

1. send home prepared parent participation survey

Week 2

1. send reminders for outstanding surveys

Week 3

1. record final survey results

2. design and send home explanation of the first take home reading project: Abe Lincoln's Hat by Martha Brenner

Week 4

1. tally school-based incentive reading program results

February

Week 1

1. design and send home second take home reading project: The Post Office Book by Gail Gibbons

Week 2

1. design and send home third take home reading project : Germs, Germs, Germs

Week 3

1. design and send home explanation of at school reading project along with sign

up sheets.

Week 4

1. tally school-based incentive reading program results

March week 1- **April** week 3 begin parent student school reading projects related to their favorite stories.

March

Week 4

1. tally school-based incentive reading program results

April

Week 4

1. complete data collection and begin to record results
2. tally school-based reading program results

Methods of Assessment

The data collection methods to be used in order to assess the effects of the intervention include administration of a parent survey. Teacher journal entries and checklists regarding parent/student reading habits and response activities will be kept throughout the intervention to document the degree of parental involvement in each reading project.

Chapter 4

Project Results

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of the project was to increase parental involvement through the existing reading program. In order to accomplish the desired change, students and parents were provided with reading projects for both at home and at school.

Prior to the intervention school librarians were notified so that their support and cooperation would be secured. Permission was received from librarians to check out large quantities of books and multiple copies. In addition, parents were notified of the project and surveyed to establish a base line of their involvement and their reading routines at home (Appendix C).

During the first week of the intervention data were collected in the following manner: parent involvement and reading.

The intervention began with the explanation of the take-home reading projects (Appendix D). The purpose of the intervention was to increase parental involvement through reading. Each week, for a total of three weeks parents were sent a given library book accompanied with an explanation of the project to be completed at home and returned to school. Upon returning the projects to school students were given an opportunity to present their finished projects and reflect on various questions concerning parental involvement.

The second part of the intervention was "in class" parent and child participation projects (Appendix E). Through this project parent and child selected a favorite story and designed a related activity to later present to the entire class. Parents were given suggested ideas that would enhance all learning modalities.

The final part of our intervention was the incentive reading program. This reading program began during the first week of intervention. The reading incentive program required parents and students to read and list at home a minimum of seven books per

month (Appendix F). During the first two months no incentives were issued upon completion of the returned signed slip. The final three months consisted of monthly incentives.

At the conclusion of the intervention parent letters were sent along with parent post surveys (Appendix G) to determine if any changes in students reading habits were noted.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of parental involvement and reading among the targeted first and second grade students, parent surveys sent home before intervention and after were examined, and teacher journals and checklists were noted.

There were 10 out of 16 parent surveys completed at the first grade level for a return rate of 63% down from the initial 88%. Parent surveys at the second grade level had a return rate of 76% down from the initial 86%. According to the surveys, parent's comments indicated the difficulty in arranging work schedules and sibling daycare as major factors in the lack of their classroom and reading involvement.

At the end of the post survey parents were asked if they preferred the take-home projects to the "in class" projects. First grade parents reflected on the post survey that they were more comfortable with the take-home projects while second grade parents showed an equal interest in both types of projects.

Analysis of Projects

The data analysis for take-home and "in class" projects reflected a significant difference in first grade as opposed to the results in second grade. A summary of the administered projects is presented in Figure 3.

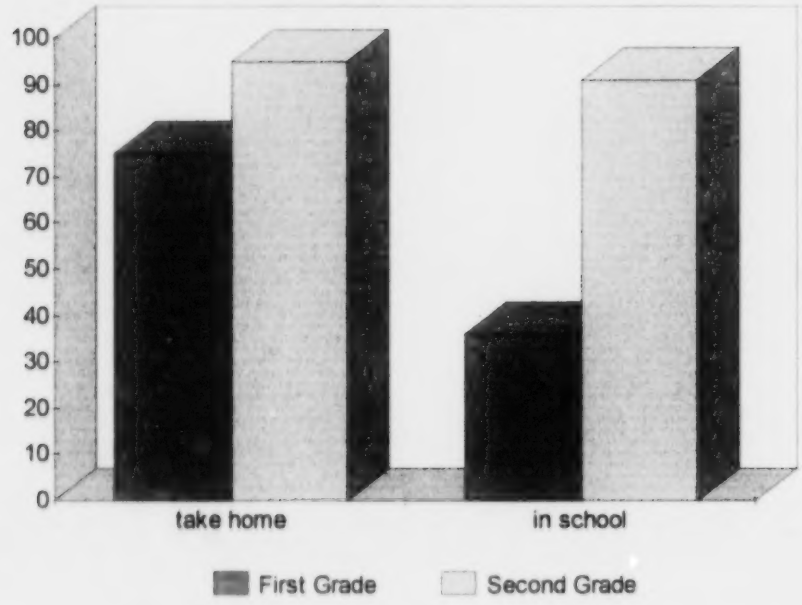


Figure 3

Take Home and In-Class Projects

As appears in the figure above the first grade parents participated more with the projects that involved take home activities. This was in direct correlation with the surveys sent prior to the intervention. The final results show a 40% difference between take home and "in class" projects. On the other hand second grade parent involvement resulted in only a 4% difference between the take home and "in class" projects.

Reading logs were used in the targeted first and second grade rooms. A variety of motivates and incentives were in place to increase the parent involvement during leisure time reading at home. Tables 4 and 5 indicates the results of the increase recorded in the reading logs, which involved extended activities to encourage student/parent reading at home.

Table 4

Student/Parent Reading At Home

First Grade	number of students participated	number of students completed
April	16	16
May	16	14

Table 5

Second Grade	number of students participated	number of students completed
April	21	20
May	21	21

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based upon the presentation and analysis of the data compiled during the implementation of the Action Plan, several conclusions concerning reading and parent involvement can be drawn. Results from implementation the action plan did not show a significant improvement at the first grade level due to the fact students at this level are not independent readers. It is quite evident in results shown that parent involvement is needed at this age level. In the targeted second grade results showed an overall increase

in all projects and incentive activities when parents were involved.

Responses to the take home activities were more enjoyable in both targeted classes. Parents commented that the projects to be completed at home involved not only the student but also the entire family. Researchers found that this was an added bonus as it tapped different modalities and acted as a drawstring to bring the family unit closer. Additionally student/parent projects sparked extended experiences not provided by the teacher. One student in the targeted first grade went to visit the grandfather who was a former postman after completing the February take home project. She shared several keepsakes loaned to her by her grandfather. In the targeted second grade a student brought in a stamp collection belonging to the aunt. Through these additional shared experiences all students were taught to transfer information.

The first and second grade teachers found that parents wanted to be involved but were not always given a variety of ways to do so. When a variety of activities were suggested parents commented that this gave them a new way to bond with their child. The first and second grade teachers not only gave activities but also encouraged parents to contact them for assistance. A second grade parent commented that it was a scary thought to get up in front of 20 staring faces. She went on to say that she was put at ease when the teacher made her presentation a team effort.

The project motivated great enthusiasm and excitement for parent involvement in reading with their children. Not only did student's motivation for reading improve, researchers found themselves trying to find more ways to extend projects with parental involvement. Students and parents began to apply this intervention in their leisure reading, creating projects in their own selection of literature. Students returned to school eager to share their home projects with the class. Students showed pride in their individual accomplishments, resulting in the generation of similar peer projects. As a result of this intervention, researchers plan to implement like projects and activities in their current curriculum.

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Appendices

Appendix A

PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

01. Last year, did the school sponsor workshops or courses to help parents understand and work with children?

_____Yes _____No _____Do not know

02. Are communications from school, such as report cards and newsletters available in a language you understand?

_____Yes _____No _____Do not know

03. Are communications from school, such as report cards and newsletters clearly written?

_____Yes _____No _____Do not know

04. The best way to communicate with you and/or your family is: (check your two preferred methods)

_____School memos

_____Children's teachers

_____PTA newsletter

_____Parent liaison

_____Counselor

_____Parent representative (your own culture)

_____ Parent representative (of any given culture)

05. How many parent-teacher conferences did you attend last year?

_____None _____One (1) _____Two (2) or more

06. How often do you communicate with teachers about your child's performance?

_____Often _____A little _____Never

07. Were you asked about your interests, talents, and availability for volunteering at school?

_____Yes _____No

Appendix A (Continued)

08. Last year, did you volunteer at school?

_____Yes _____No

09. If you did volunteer, please indicate for what type of activity did you volunteer for:

Helping on trips or at parties	_____
Sharing food, stories and customs from your culture	_____
Assisting in the classroom (e.g., tutoring, grading papers, etc.)	_____
Leading club and/or activities	_____
Other (please specify)	_____

10. If you have not volunteered at school, please indicate why:

_____Have never been asked

_____Conflict with work schedule

_____Have other children to care for

_____I do not feel comfortable

_____Not interested

_____Other (please specify) _____

11. Do you listen to your child read or read aloud to your child?

_____Often _____Sometimes _____Very little _____Never

12. Does the school have an active parent-teacher organization (e.g. PTA, PTO)?

_____Yes _____No

13. If yes, how many parent-teacher organization meetings have you attended?

_____One (1) _____Two (2) or more _____None

Addtional Bcoks Read at Home

Student			January	February	March	April	May	Total Books Read

Appendix B

Additional Books Read At Home

Appendix C

Parent Reading Survey

Dear parents/guardian,

Below are additional questions I need you complete for my research project. Please respond and return as soon as possible.

Thank you for your continued support.

1. How many times per week do you and your child read together? _____

2. If you are unable to read with your child as much as you like please indicate why?

__ conflict with work schedule
__ have other children to care for
__ I do not feel comfortable
__ other (please specify)_____

3. How many children are in the home?_____

Parent Reading Survey

Dear parents/guardian,

Below are additional questions I need you complete for my research project. Please respond and return as soon as possible.

Thank you for your continued support.

1. How many times per week do you and your child read together? _____

2. If you are unable to read with your child as much as you like please indicate why?

__ conflict with work schedule
__ have other children to care for
__ I do not feel comfortable
__ other (please specify)_____

3. How many children are in the home?_____

Appendix D

January 31, 2001

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As a part of the research project I am conducting, I will be sending home a story to read and a family activity. These activities will need to be completed by your student and an adult.

The class will be participating in this for the following three weeks. The projects will be sent home every Friday and will need to be completed and returned on or before the following Friday so that the student can present and or display their finished product. I'm sending this first activity home earlier. Please don't hesitate to have your student return the finished work before the following Friday---we'd enjoy the extra time to admire his/her efforts!

First Home Reading Project

Abe Lincoln's Hat by Martha Brenner

1. Read together the story and discuss what happened.
2. Talk about why Abe's hat was so important.
3. Together design and create a hat using materials found around your home.
4. Find something important to put inside your hat (as Abe did).
5. Bring your created hat to school to share and display.

Please have FUN with this project! Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Miss Clark

Miss Clark

Appendix D (continued)

February 9, 2001

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Thank you for your help and support with the recent Abe Lincoln's Hat project. We have all enjoyed such unique hats!! What fun we've had listening to all the moments your child has shared in its preparation. Here is the second, of the three take-home activities, you and your student will need to complete and return on or before the following Friday.

Second Home Reading Project

The Post Office Book

1. Read together and discuss the functions of the post office.
2. Create a mobile using whatever materials you wish to attach and complete the copied stamps.
3. As you read through each stamp, help your child locate the information to complete the stamp's space.
4. Some materials you might use: Construction paper, yarn, ribbon, string, styrofoam, cardboard, dowel rods, coat hanger ... The sky is the limit. Be creative.

Remember, like the rest of these projects, this is intended to be a fun reading experience for you and your child to share. Thank you, again, for participating in this project with me.

Sincerely,

Miss Clark

Miss Clark

Appendix D (continued)

February 16, 2001

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We have all looked forward to hearing about the mobiles created for the story titled, The Post Office Book by Gail Gibbons. Thank you for your continued help and support with these family activities. This is the third and final take-home activity that you and your child will need to complete and return on or before the following Friday.

Third Home Reading Project

Germs! Germs! Germs! by Bobbi Katz

1. Read the story together and discuss what happened.
2. Create and write your own story about a germ. Include some of the following information: what the germ looked like, what were you doing when you found the germ, where the germ lived, how it traveled, how long it lived and how you got rid of it.
3. Illustrate your story using crayons, markers, paints and/or colored pencils.
4. Design a front cover to your story. Don't forget to include the story title, author and illustrator (that's you)!
5. Bring your story to school to share and display.

Please enjoy this project and the beginning of a young author/illustrator!

Sincerely,

Miss Clark

Miss Clark

Appendix E

February 20, 2001

Dear parents and guardians,

This week will be the completion of our third and final take-home reading projects. Starting in March we will begin the in-class parent and child participation projects. These projects will not be books chosen by the teacher but will be stories that you and your child select. These stories may be from books that you have at home, school library, or public library. The following sequence for the in-class project will be:

1. select a day during the months of March and April to come to class
2. select a story to share with the class
3. create a project that will involve the entire class related to the story (ideas for projects may be cooking, making a collage, singing a song, writing a story, drawing a picture, role playing, and/or an idea of your choice)

Please send a note stating a choice of 2 or 3 days that you would be available. Scheduling would be preferred in the afternoon but mornings could be accommodated.

Appendix F

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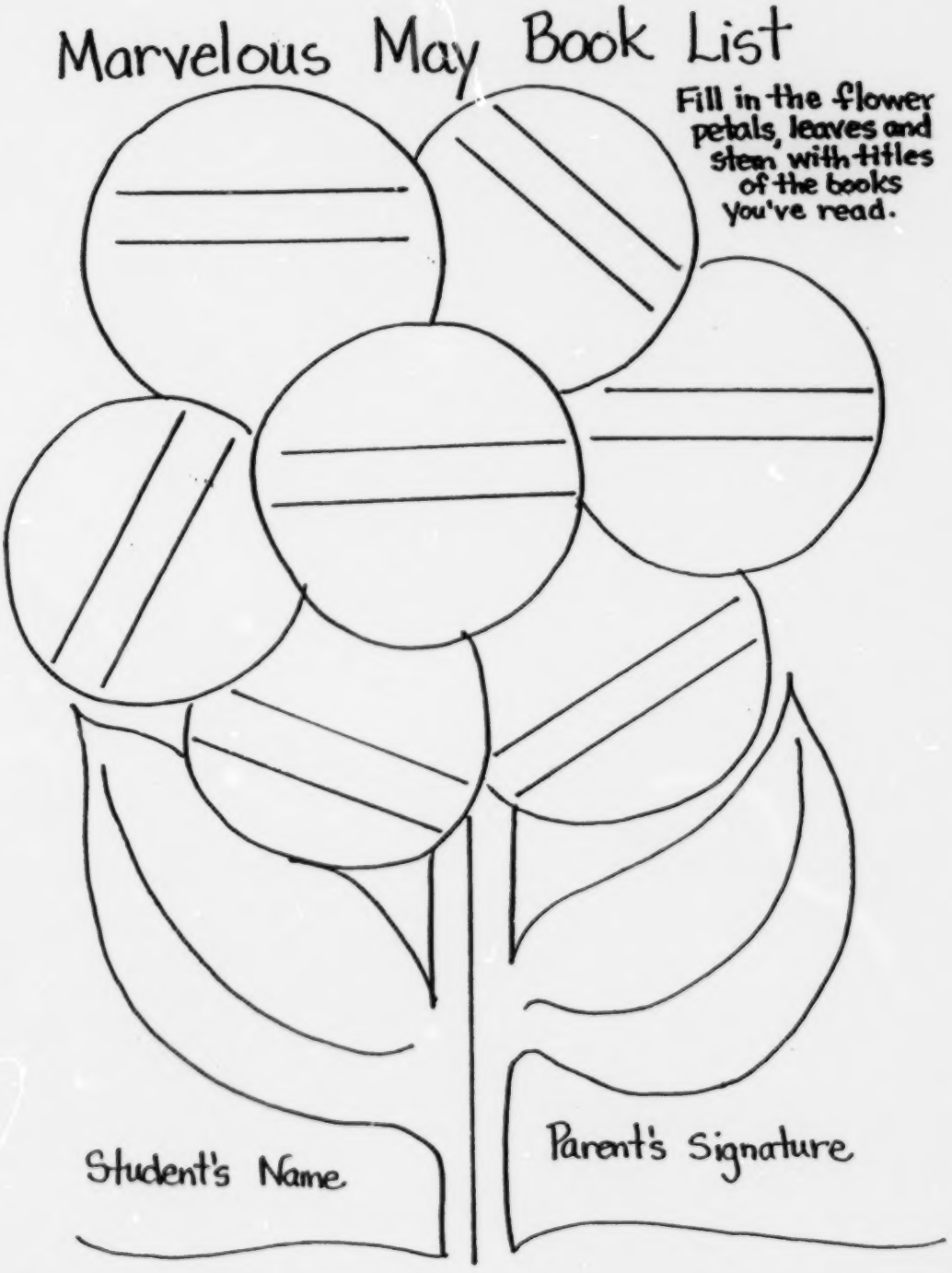
Appendix F (continued)

Appendix F (continued)


Marvelous May Book List
Fill in the flower petals, leaves and stem with titles of the books you've read.
Student's Name
Parent's Signature

Appendix G

Dear parents/guardians,

Please find below a list of 4 follow-up questions related to our class reading project.

1. Did you prefer the take-home or in-class reading projects?

2. Briefly state your reason for this preference.

3. As a result of these projects did you notice a change in your child's reading interest?

4. Comments welcomed